THE

NOVEL

From which the Play of

The MERCHANT of VENICE,

Written by SHAKESPEAR,

IS TAKEN.

Tranſlated from the ITALIAN.

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

A TRANSLATION of a NOVEL from the Decamerone of BOCACCIO.

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PREFACE.

AFTER ſo many attempts to explain and illuſtrate Shakeſpear, and eſpecially a late work of an ingenious female critic, it is ſurprizing that no perſon would oblige the world with ſome remarks on the play, which it is reaſonable to ſuppoſe was taken from the following Novel; and it is ſtill more remarkable, as the book from whence this ſmall piece is tranſlated, was printed about ſix years ago at Florence. The edition is exactly a copy, with all the typographical errors, of the original printed at Milan, in the year 1554, and was*

* The title of the book is Il Pecorone, nel quale ſi contengono Cinquanta Novelle Antiche, belle d' inventione, et di ſtile; in Milano appreſſo di Giovann' Antonio de gli Antonii.

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immediately ordered to be ſurppeſſed, and of conſequence more ſought after, on account of ſome ludicrous adventures related in theſe novels, of ſome very great families at Florence: this circumſtance may have contributed to render it ſcarce, at leaſt here. Had the ſprightly critic been acquainted with this novel, ſhe would certainly have commended our immortal poet as much for his judgment in the main circumſtance of his plot, and the ſubſtitution of the caſkets, as ſhe finds fault with it in other of his plays: for although the chief hinge on which the plot turns may pleaſe in a novel, or in the cloſet, it would hardly have been borne with on the ſtage, till at leaſt long after the time in which our poet lived.

The author of the book of Novels was Ser Giovanni Fiorentino, who wrote it in the year 1378, *thirty years after the time in which the Scene of the Decamerone of the inimitable Bocaccio* † *is laid: and though this*

† Giovanni Bocaccio, the great friend of Franceſco Petrarca, and author of the Decamerone, died at Certaldo in

this author is greatly inferior to the other in ſtyle, and invention, he may be read with pleaſure; eſpecially for the ſake of this novel, (which is indeed one of the beſt) and ſome others very ſingular and uncommon. Shakeſpear was undoubtedly well acquainted with the Decamerone, and the novels of Bandello; and to any one who will take the trouble to compare the incidents in the play, with thoſe of the novel, it will appear ſtrongly, that he had read or heard of this. He could certainly never want aſſiſtance from ſome friend, who would furniſh him with matter enough for his genius to work upon, though it ſhould be granted that he was not maſter of the Italian language, or that no tranſlation of this book was extant in his time. Had this novel made a part of the famous work of the moſt admirable proſe writer

in the year 1375, aged 62. See Manni Iſtoria del Decamerone di Giovanni Bocaccio, page 129.

This author has taken incredible pains to illuſtrate the life and writings of his juſtly eſteemed countryman. The work is well worthy the regard of all lovers of ſuch kinds of literature: it was printed at Florence in quarto in the year 1742.

that has appeared ſince the time of Cicero, it would have made a different figure: the incidents are what alone can make it paſs, and it is with ſome difficulty Ser Giovanni has been taught to ſpeak tolerable Engliſh.

The idea of the caſkets appears to have been taken from the firſt novel of the 10*th day of the Decamerone, and is tranſlated to leave every one at liberty to judge whether the conjecture has an appearance of probability. If the reader receives any pleaſure from the peruſal of this triſle, the tranſlator will be much pleaſed; if he diſlikes the attempt, he is deſired to look on it only as a grain of incenſe, burning at the ſhrine of the poetical Saint, who is the adoration of every Engliſhman who can read, ſee, or hear.*

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THE NOVEL FROM WHICH The MERCHANT of VENICE IS TAKEN.

THERE lived at Florence, in the houſe of the Scali, a merchant whoſe name was Bindo, who had been ſeveral times at Tana, and at Alexandria, and had made the other long voyages uſually made by the merchants. This Bindo was rich, and had three ſons grown to man's eſtate. He being near his end, called for the two eldeſt, and in their preſence made his will, and left theſe two heirs of every thing he had in the world: to the youngeſt he left nothing. The will being made, this youngeſt, whoſe name was Giannetto, hearing what had been done, went to his father's bedſide, and ſaid to him, What has my father done? not to have mentioned me in his will is ſomewhat extraordinary. The father replied, My dear Giannetto, there is no creature living

to whom I wiſh better than to you; and therefore 'tis my deſire that you leave this city after my death, and that you go to Venice to your godfather, whoſe name is Anſaldo; he has no child, and has wrote to me often to ſend you there to him; and I can tell you, he is the richeſt merchant amongſt the Chriſtians: and therefore it is my requeſt, that as ſoon as I am dead, you go and carry this letter to him, and if you behave well, you will be certainly a rich man. The ſon anſwered, I am ready to do whatever my dear father ſhall command: upon which he gave him his benediction, and in a few days died.

The ſons all made great lamentation at his death, and paid all neceſſary honours to his corpſe. Some days after, the two brothers ſent for Giannetto, and told him, Brother, it is true that our father made a will, and we two are left his heirs, without any mention of you; nevertheleſs, you are our brother, and ſhall have the command of every thing as much as we ourſelves; you ſhall not want till we are in want. Giannetto replied to this, My dear brothers, I thank you moſt heartily for your offer, but I am reſolved to ſeek my fortune in ſome other place, and do you enjoy here the riches left to you. His brothers, finding him determined, make him a preſent of a horſe, and money to bear his expences. Giannetto took leave of them,

and

and went to Venice, to the counting-houſe of Anſaldo, and preſented the letter given by the father before his death. Anſaldo reading the letter, knew this young man to be the ſon of his deareſt friend Bindo; and having finiſhed the letter, ran immediately to embrace him, crying out, My deareſt godſon, whom I have ſo long wiſhed to ſee, is welcome to my arms. Then aſking news of his father, Giannetto replied, He is dead. Embracing him again with tears, and kiſſing him, I am much grieved, replied Anſaldo, to hear of the death of Bindo: by his aſſiſtance it was that I got the greateſt part of what I am worth: but the joy I feel in ſeeing you, mitigates my ſorrow for the loſs of him. He conducted him to his houſe, and gave orders to his clerks, his grooms, his ſervants, and every one in the houſe, that Giannetto ſhould be obeyed, and ſerved with more attention than had been paid to himſelf. He then delivered him the keys of his ready money; and told him, Son, ſpend this money in dreſſing and equipping yourſelf in the manner you like beſt; keep a table to entertain company, and make yourſelf known: I ſhall leave it to you to do as you think beſt; and remember, that the more you gain the good will of every body, the more you will be dear to me.

Giannetto now began to viſit and frequent the gentlemen of Venice, to give entertain-

ments, had a number of ſervants, and bought good horſes to aſſiſt at all tiltings and tournaments, and ſuch like exerciſes, at which he excelled; being adroit, expert, and well-bred, and knowing how to do the honours on all the occaſions that offered; particularly to Anſaldo, he was more obedient and courteous, than if he had been an hundred times his father. He conducted himſelf ſo diſcreetly with all ſorts of people, that almoſt every body in Venice was fond of him and loved him greatly. Anſaldo could think of nothink but him; ſo much was he pleaſed with his good manners and behaviour. There was ſcarce any party of pleaſure in Venice to which Giannetto was not invited, ſo much was he eſteemed by all.

Now it happened, that two of his moſt intimate acquaintance had deſigned to go with two ſhips, laden with merchandize, to Alexandria, as was uſual every year; they told Giannetto, he would do well to take pleaſure in a voyage at ſea with them, to ſee the world, and more eſpecially Damaſcus, and the countries near it. Giannetto ſaid, In good faith I would go willingly if my father Anſaldo will give leave. We will manage ſo well with him, his companions anſwered, as to make him content. They go to Anſaldo, and beg his permiſſion for Giannetto, to go in the ſpring with them to Alexandria; and deſire him to provide him a ſhip, that he

he may ſee a little of the world. Anſaldo ſaid, he would give leave, if the other deſired it. They anſwered, it was his deſire. Anſaldo immediately provided a very fine ſhip, and loaded it with merchandize, and adorned it with ſtreamers, and furniſhed it with arms as many as were neceſſary; and as ſoon as it was ready, he gave orders to the captain and ſailors to do every thing Giannetto commanded. He told them, he did not ſend him in hopes of great gain, but to ſee the world at his pleaſure. And when Giannetto was going on board, all Venice was gathered to ſee him; for there had not, for a long time, ſo fine a ſhip been ſeen to ſail from thence. Every body was concerned at his departure. He took his leave of Anſaldo and his acquaintance; and putting out to ſea, they hoiſted the ſails, and ſtood for Alexandria. The three friends with their ſhips ſailing in company for ſome days, it happened one morning early, that Giannetto ſaw a gulph, with a fine port, and aſked the captain how the port was called? He replied, That place belongs to a widow lady, who has ruined many gentlemen. In what manner? ſays Giannetto. He anſwers, This lady is a fine and beautiful woman, and has made a law, that whoever arrives here is obliged to go to bed with her, and if he can have the enjoyment of her, he muſt take her for his wife, and be lord of the port, and all

the country; but if he cannot enjoy her, he loſes every thing he has brought with him. Giannetto, after a little reflection, tells the captain to do every thing in his power to get into the port. The captain bids him conſider what he had commanded; that many perſons had gone in who had been ſtripped of every thing. Giannetto tells him, not to trouble himſelf on that ſcore; do what I order. He was obeyed; and in an inſtant they turn the ſhip, and ſlide into the port ſo eaſily, that the other ſhips perceived nothing.

In the morning the news was ſpread, of a fine ſhip being arrived in the port, ſo that every body ran to ſee it. The lady was informed ſoon of it, and ſent for Giannetto, who waited on her immediately, and ſalutes her with a low bow. She, taking him by the hand, aſks him who he is? from whence he came? and if he knew the cuſtom of the country? He anſwers in the affirmative; and that the knowledge of that cuſtom was his only reaſon for coming. The lady replies, You are a hundred times welcome; and that day paid him great honours, and ſent for her barons, counts, and knights in great number, who were her ſubjects, to keep Giannetto company. Theſe nobles were highly delighted with the good breeding and manners of Giannetto; every one was in raptures with him, and the whole day was ſpent in muſick and dancing, and feaſting at the

court,

court, in honour of him; and all would have been rejoiced to have him for their lord.

The night being come, the lady taking him by the hand, and leading him to her chamber, ſaid, It ſeems to be time to go to bed. Giannetto tells the lady, he is entirely devoted to her ſervice; and immediately two damſels enter with wine and ſweet meats. The lady ſays, ſhe is ſure he muſt be thirſty; and entreats him to taſte the wine: he takes the ſweet meats, and drinks ſome of the wine, which was prepared with ingredients to cauſe ſleep; this he was ignorant of, and drank half the cup, as he found it to his taſte. He then undreſſes himſelf, and goes into the bed, where he inſtantly falls aſleep; the lady lays in the bed by his ſide: he never wakes till late in the morning; but the lady roſe with the ſun, and gave orders to unload the veſſel, which ſhe found full of rich and coſtly merchandiſe. After nine o'clock, the women ſervants of the lady go to the bedſide, order Giannetto to riſe and be gone, for he had loſt the ſhip and every thing belonging to it. He was much aſhamed; and then perceived that he had been guilty of great folly. The lady gave him a horſe, and money for his pocket, and he leaves the place very ſorrowful and melancholy, and goes forwards on the way towards Venice. When he arrives, he dares not return home for ſhame; but at night goes to the houſe of a friend,

friend, who is ſurpriſed to ſee him, and inquires of him the cauſe of his return? He anſwers, his ſhip had ſtruck on a rock in the night, and was broke in pieces, and every thing deſtroyed; he held faſt a great piece of wood, which threw him on ſhore, and ſo he came there by land.

He ſtaid many days in the houſe of this friend, who going one day to make a viſit to Anſaldo, and finding him very diſconſolate: I fear, ſays Anſaldo, ſo much, that this ſon of mine, is either dead, or that the ſea does not agree with him, that I have no reſt day or night; ſo great is my love to him. The friend told him, he could tell him news of him; that he had been ſhipwreckt, and had loſt his all; but that he himſelf was ſafe. God be praiſed, ſays Anſaldo; if he be alive, I am ſatisfy'd: I do not value the loſs of the ſhip: where is he? The young man reply'd, He is at my houſe. Anſaldo inſtantly gets up, and runs to find him, and when he ſaw him, embracing him, My dear ſon, ſays he, you need not fear my diſpleaſure for what has happened; it is a common accident; trouble yourſelf no farther; as you have received no hurt, all is well. He takes him home, all the way telling him to be chearful and eaſy.

The news of this accident was ſoon known all over Venice, and every one was concerned for the loſs Giannetto had ſuſtained.

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Some time after this, his companions arrived from Alexandria very rich, and demanding what was become of their friend, and having heard the ſtory, they ran to ſee and embrace him; aſking him in what manner he parted from them? where he went? that they could hear nothing of him; that they ſailed backwards and forwards all that day, and could not ſee nor hear any tidings of his ſhip. They told him, their uneaſineſs had been ſo great during the voyage, that their pleaſure was ſpoiled by the fear of hearing news of his death. Giannetto tells them, a contrary wind blowing from an arm of the ſea, drove his ſhip plum againſt a rock near ſhore; and with difficulty he ſaved himſelf; but every thing was wreckt. This was the excuſe Giannetto forged, not to be obliged to make known his folly. They rejoiced with him, and returned thanks to God for his ſafety; telling him that next ſpring, by God's aſſiſtance, he might gain as much as he had loſt the laſt; and therefore, ſay they, let us enjoy ourſelves, and not be dejected: and they amuſed and diverted themſelves as uſual. But Giannetto had no thoughts other than of his return to the lady; and was reſolved to marry her, or die in the attempt: and with theſe thoughts, could hardly be chearful. Anſaldo told him frequently, not to be caſt down; ſays he, We have enough left to live very comfortably. Giannetto ſaid, he

ſhould never be happy, till he was at liberty to make another voyage. Anſaldo perceiving his intention, when the time was come, provided another ſhip of more value, and with more merchandizes than the firſt; and, indeed, freighted it with almoſt all he was worth in the world. His companions, when their ſhips had every thing in order, ſet ſail, with Giannetto; and ſailing along for ſeveral days together, he was all attention to diſcover once more the port of the lady, which was called The port of the lady of Belmonte. Coming one night to the mouth of it, which was in a gulph of the ſea, he immediately knew it to be the ſame, and ſhifting ſails and rudder, he entered ſo ſecretly, that his companions in the other ſhips had no apprehenſion that his ſhip was miſſing.

The lady the next morning looking on the port from the bedchamber, and ſeeing the ſtreamers of the ſhip playing in the wind, knew it; and aſked her maid, if ſhe knew the ſtreamers? the maid ſaid, ſhe imagined it was the ſhip of the young man who arrived the laſt year, and had left ſo fine a cargo behind him. You are in the right, anſwered the lady; he muſt ſurely have a great regard for me, for never any one returned here a ſecond time: the maid ſaid, ſhe had never ſeen a more agreeable man. The lady ſent her ſervants in great number

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to attend him, who ſerved him wi h much attention, and he treated them very graciouſly; and went to the Caſtle, and preſented himſelf to the lady; who, as ſoon as ſhe ſaw him, embraced him, which embrace he as devoutly returned, and the day was paſſed in joy and revels; for the lady had ſent for her nobles of both ſexes, who came to do honour to Giannetto, and were ſo well pleaſed with his behaviour, that they were ſorry not to have him for their maſter. The ladies were enamoured of his dancing; the comelineſs of his perſon, and the ſweetneſs of his countenance, made all of them ſuppoſe him to be the ſon of ſome great man. Bed-time being come, the lady taking him by the hand, entreated him to go to reſt: when they were ſeated in the chamber, the two damſels enter with wine and ſweet meats; and having eat and drank of them, they go to bed, and immediately Giannetto falls aſleep, the lady undreſſed lying by his ſide; but, in ſho t, he waked not the whole night. In the morning, the lady riſes, and gives orders to ſtrip the ſhip. After nine o'clock, he awakes, ſeeks for the lady, finds nothing; raiſes his head from the pillow, and finding it is late, gets up, and is aſhamed of what has happened.

He has a horſe and money given to him, and is told to be gone, and away he goes ſorrowful and ſad, and never ſtops till he

gets to Venice; and at night goes to the houſe of the ſame friend, who, when he ſaw him, with great wonder and aſtoniſhment aſked him, what was the matter? I am undone, ſays Giannetto, my curſed ill fortune firſt brought me to Venice. His friend anſwered, You may well curſe your fortune, for you are the cauſe of the ruin of Anſaldo, who was the greateſt and richeſt merchant of any of the Chriſtians; and your ſhame ought to be greater than the loſs you have ſuffered. Giannetto lived privately many days in the houſe of his friend, not knowing what to do, or ſay, in the deſign of returning to Florence without ſeeing Anſaldo. At laſt he took a reſolution of ſeeing him, and accordingly waited on him. When Anſaldo ſaw him, he roſe from his chair, and running to embrace him, told him he was welcome: Giannetto with tears returned his embraces. Anſaldo, when he had heard his tale, Do not grieve, my dear ſon, ſays he, be aſſured that I cannot be angry, ſince I find you ſafe; we have ſtill enough remaining to live decently: the ſea enriches ſome men, others it ruins.

All Venice heard the ſtory, and was concerned for Anſaldo: this misfortune obliged him to ſell ſome eſtates to ſatisfy his creditors, who furniſhed the goods. The companions of Giannetto returned again from Alexandria very rich, and when at Venice they

they were informed of this accident, they ſaid it was the moſt extraordinary accident that could happen: they made a viſit to Anſaldo, and Giannetto, and with great kindneſs told them, not to take too much to heart what was paſſed. We propoſe to make ſay they, the next year, a voyage on your account: we have been the cauſe of this your loſs, as we adviſed Giannetto at firſt to venture to ſea; therefore fear nothing; as long as we have any thing, it will be at your diſpoſal, as much as if it was your own. Anſaldo returned them his thanks, and ſaid, he had ſtill enough not to be troubleſome to his friends. Poor Giannetto's head was day and night full of the thoughts of his bad ſucceſs, and he could not put on a face of chearfulneſs: when Anſaldo enquired what was the matter, he confeſſed, he could never be contented till he ſhould be in a condition to regain all that he loſt. My dear child, you ſhall go no more, ſays Anſaldo; it will be better to ſtay here, content with the little we have left, than to riſque another voyage.

Giannetto told him, he had made a firm reſolution, to do all in his power to go again; that he could not bear the ſhame of living in the manner he muſt do. When Anſaldo found him reſolved, he began to ſell every thing he had, and equip another ſhip; and ſo he did, and diſpoſed of all he

was

was worth, and left himſelf deſtitute, to furniſh this other fine ſhip with merchandize: but, as he wanted ſtill ten thouſand ducats, he apply'd himſelf to a Jew at Meſtri, and borrowed them on condition, that if they were not paid on the feaſt of St. John in the next month of June, that the Jew might take a pound of fleſh from any part of his body he pleaſed. Anſaldo agreed, and the Jew had an obligation drawn, and witneſſed, with all the form and ceremony neceſſary: and then counted him the ten thouſand ducats of gold; with which Anſaldo bought what was ſtill wanting for the veſſel. This laſt ſhip was finer and better freighted than the other two, and his companions made ready for the voyage, with a deſign that whatever they gained ſhould be for their friend. When it was time to depart, Anſaldo told Giannetto, that ſince he well knew of the obligation to the Jew, he entreated him in caſe any misfortune happened, that he would return to Venice, that he might ſee him before he died; and then he could leave the world with ſatisfaction: Giannetto promiſed to do every thing that he conceived might give him pleaſure. Anſaldo gave him his bleſſing, they take their leave, and the ſhips ſet out.

The two companions obſerved carefully the ſhip of Giannetto, while he had nothing

in his head but to contrive in what manner to ſteal into the port of Belmonte; and he prevailed with one of the ſailors in the night to ſail the veſſel into the port of the lady. The morning being clear, his companions looking round, and not ſeeing any where the veſſel, ſaid to themſelves, Giannetto has certainly bad luck; but continued their courſe, wondering greatly where the ſhip could be gone. The ſhip being arrived in port, all ran from the caſtle, hearing Giannetto was come again, and wondering much at his return. He muſt undoubtedly, ſay they, be the ſon of ſome great perſonage, as he comes every year with ſuch rich merchandize, and fine ſhips: would to God he was our maſter! He was viſited by all the principal men of the country, and it was told to the lady, that Giannetto was arrived in port. She ſaw from the window the veſſel, and knew the ſtreamers; and making the ſign of the croſs, cries! This is certainly a bold undertaking! this is the man, who has already left ſo great riches in this country; and immediately ſent for him.

Giannetto goes to the caſtle, ſalutes, embraces her, and makes his bows, and the day is ſpent in joy and feaſting; and to honour him, a tournament is ordered, and many barons and knights tilted that day. Giannetto did wonders, ſo well did he underſtand the lance, and was ſo graceful a figure

figure on horſeback: he pleaſed ſo much, hat all were again deſirous to have him for heir lord.

The lady, when it was the uſual time, taking him by the hand, begged him to take his reſt. When he paſſed the door of the chamber, one of the damſels of the lady, laying her mouth to his ear, in a whiſper ſaid to him, Make a pretence to drink the liquor, but touch not one drop this evening. He underſtood what ſhe meant, and when the lady ſaid, I know you muſt be thirſty, I muſt have you drink before you go to bed, immediately two damſels, handſome as angels, with wine and ſweet meats in the uſual manner, entered the room, and preſented the wine. Who can refuſe wine from ſuch beautiful hands? cries Giannetto: at which the lady ſmiled. Giannetto takes the cup, and making as if he had drank, pours the wine into his boſom. The lady thinking he had drank, ſays aſide to herſelf with great joy, You muſt go, young man, and bring another ſhip, for this is condemned. Giannetto went to bed, and finding himſelf briſk and in great ſpirits, he thought it a thouſand years till the lady came to bed, comforting himſelf with the hopes that he had caught her now certainly, and that ſhe would find, ſhe was miſtaken in her man; and in order to entice her ſoon to bed, he began to ſnore as if he

ſlept ſoundly. The lady perceiving this, ſaid, this will do, and laid herſelf down by his ſide. Giannetto loſes no time, but turning to the lady, embraces her, ſaying, Now am I in poſſeſſion of my utmoſt wiſhes. He gave her immediately the ſtrongeſt proofs of his affection, and lay all night in her arms. The lady was highly pleaſed with her lover, and early in the morning ſent for her principal ſubjects, telling them, that Giannetto was their lord; and gave them orders to pay all poſſible honours to him. Immediately the news is ſpread through the whole territory; the people crying, Long live our new maſter! long live our new maſter! the bells and muſical inſtruments inviting all to joy and mirth. The nobles who were not at the caſtle, were ſent for to appear there, and behold their maſter, and aſſiſt at all the rejoicings. When Giannetto came out of his chamber, he was knighted, and placed in the chair of ſtate; had the ſcepter put into his hand, and was proclaimed ſovereign of the country, with great pomp and ſplendour; and when the lords and ladies were come to the caſtle, he married the lady in great ceremony. Nothing can be imagined equal to the joy on that occaſion, as every one endeavoured to excell in tilting, dancing, muſick, and every amuſement, and diverſion, practiced at ſuch ſolemnities.

Giannetto, who was of a diſpoſition that did honour to his exaltation, gave preſents of every thing of value he had brought with him: he governed excellently well, and cauſed juſtice to be adminiſtered impartially to all ſorts of people. He continued ſome time in this happy ſtate, and never had entertained a thought of poor Anſaldo, who had given his bond to the Jew for ten thouſand ducats. But one day, as he ſtood at the window of the palace with his bride, he ſaw a number of people paſs along the piazza, with lighted torches in their hands, who were going to make their offerings. What is the meaning of this? ſays he. The lady anſwered, they are a company of artificers, who are going to make their offerings at the church of St. John, this day is his feſtival. Giannetto inſtantly recollected Anſaldo, and leaving the window, he gave a great ſigh, and turned pale; running about the room in great diſtraction. His lady inquired the cauſe of his ſudden change. He ſaid, he felt nothing. She continued to preſs with great earneſtneſs, till he was obliged to confeſs the cauſe of his uneaſineſs, that Anſaldo was engaged for the money, and that the term was expired; and the grief he was in, leſt his father ſhould loſe his life for him: that if the ten thouſand ducats were not paid that day, he muſt loſe a pound of his fleſh. The lady told him to mount on horſeback,

and

and go by land the neareſt way, which was better than to go by ſea; to take ſome attendants, and an hundred thouſand ducats; and not to ſtop, till he arrived at Venice: and if he was not dead, to endeavour to bring Anſaldo to her. Giannetto takes horſe with twenty attendants, and makes the beſt of his way to Venice.

The time being expired, the Jew had ſeized Anſaldo, and inſiſted on having a pound of fleſh. He entreated him only to wait ſome days, that if his dear Giannetto arrived, he might have the pleaſure of embracing him before his death: the Jew replied he was willing to wait, but, ſays he, if he comes an hundred times over, I will cut off the pound of fleſh, according to the words of the obligation: Anſaldo anſwered, that he was content.

Every one at Venice who had heard of this affair was much concerned: ſeveral merchants would have jointly paid the money; the Jew would not hearken to the propoſal, but inſiſted that he might commit this homicide, to have the ſatisfaction of ſaying, that he had put to death the greateſt of the Chriſtian merchants. Giannetto making all poſſible haſte to Venice, his lady ſoon followed him in a lawyer's habit, with two ſervants following her. Giannetto when he came to Venice, goes to the Jew, and (after embracing Anſaldo) tells him, he

is ready to pay the money, and as much more as he ſhould demand. The Jew ſaid, he would take no money, ſince it was not paid at the time due; but that he would have the pound of fleſh. And now this was much talked of, and every one blamed the Jew: but as Venice was a place where juſtice was ſtrictly adminiſtered, and the Jew had his pretenſions grounded on publick and received forms, nobody dared to oppoſe him, and their only reſource was entreaty; and when the merchants of Venice applied to him, he was inflexible. Giannetto offered him twenty thouſand which he refuſed; then thirty thouſand, afterwards forty, fifty, and at laſt an hundred thouſand ducats. The Jew told him, if he would give him as much gold as the city of Venice was worth, he would not accept it; and ſays he, you know little of me, if you think I will deſiſt from my demand.

The lady now arrives at Venice, in her lawyer's dreſs; and alighting at an inn, the landlord aſks of one of the ſervants who his maſter was? The ſervant having learned his leſſon, anſwered, that he was a young lawyer who had finiſhed his ſtudies at Bologna, and was returning to his own country. The landlord upon this ſhews his gueſt great civility: and when he attended at dinner, the lawyer inquiring how juſtice was adminiſtred in that city; he anſwered, juſtice in

this place is too ſevere. How comes that? ſays the lawyer. I will tell how, ſays the landlord: you muſt know, that ſome years years ago there came here a young man from Florence, whoſe name was Giannetto, he was recommended to the care of a relation who is called Anſaldo; he behaved here ſo well as to poſſeſs the eſteem and affections of every living creature, and never was a youth ſo well beloved. Now this Anſaldo ſent him out three times, each time with a ſhip of great value; he, every time, was unfortunate: and to furniſh the laſt, Anſaldo was forced to borrow ten thouſand ducats of a Jew, on condition, that if he did not repay them in June, at the feaſt of St. John, the Jew might take a pound of his fleſh. This excellent young man is now returned, and offers to pay an hundred thouſand ducats: the wicked Jew won't take them, although the beſt merchants in the city have applied to him, but to no purpoſe. Says the lawyer, this queſtion may be eaſily anſwered. If you can anſwer it, ſays the landlord, and will take the trouble to do it, and ſave this worthy man from death, you will get the love and eſteem of a moſt deſerving young man, and of all the beſt men of this city. The lawyer cauſed a proclamation to be made, that whoever had any law matters to determine, they ſhould have recourſe to him: ſo it was told to Giannetto, that a famous

lawyer

lawyer was come from Bologna, who could decide all caſes in law. Giannetto propoſed to the Jew to apply to this lawyer. With all my heart, ſays the Jew; but let who will come, I will ſtick to my bond. When they came to this judge, and had ſaluted him, he immediately knew Giannetto; but he did not remember him: for he had diſguiſed his face with the juice of certain herbs. Giannetto, and the Jew, each told the merits of the cauſe to the judge; who, when he had taken the bond and read it, ſaid to the Jew, I muſt have you take the hundred thouſand ducats, and releaſe this honeſt man, who will always have a grateful ſenſe of the favour done to him. The Jew replied, I will do no ſuch thing. The judge anſwered, it will be better for you. The Jew was poſitive to yield nothing. Upon this they go to the tribunal appointed for ſuch judgments: and our judge ſpeaks in favour of Anſaldo; and deſiring that the Jew may ſtand forth, Now, ſays he, do you (to the Jew) cut a pound of this man's fleſh where you chuſe. The Jew ordered him to be ſtripped naked; and takes in his hand a razor, which had been made on purpoſe. Giannetto ſeeing this, turning to the judge, this, ſays he, is not the favour I aſked of you. Be quiet, ſays he, the pound of fleſh is not yet cut off. As ſoon as the Jew was going to begin, take care what you do, ſays the judge, if you take

more

more or leſs than a pound, I will order your head to be ſtruck off: and I tell you beſide, that if you ſhed one drop of blood you ſhall be put to death. Your paper makes no mention of the ſhedding of blood; but ſays expreſly, that you may take a pound of fleſh, neither more nor leſs; and if you are wiſe, you will take great care what you do. He immediately ſent for the executioner to bring the block and ax; and now, ſays he, if I ſee one drop of blood, off goes your head. The Jew began to be in great fear, and Giannetto in as great joy. At length the Jew, after much wrangling, told him, you are more cunning than I can pretend to be; however, give me the hundred thouſand ducats, and I am content. No, ſays the judge, cut off your pound of fleſh according to your bond; I will not give you a farthing: why did not you take the money when it was offered? The Jew came down to ninety, and then to eighty thouſand; but the judge was ſtill reſolute. Giannetto told the judge to give what he required, that Anſaldo might have his liberty: but he replied, let me manage him. Then the Jew would have taken fifty thouſand: he ſaid, I will not give you a penny. Give me at leaſt, ſays the Jew, my own ten thouſand ducats, and a curſe confound you all. The judge replies, I will give you nothing: if you will have the pound of fleſh, take it; if not, I will order your

bond

bond to be proteſted and annulled. Every one preſent was greatly pleaſed; and deriding the Jew, ſaid, he who laid traps for others, is caught himſelf. The Jew ſeeing he could gain nothing, tore in pieces the bond in a great rage. Anſaldo was releaſed, and conducted home with great joy by Giannetto. The hundred thouſand ducats he carried to the inn to the lawyer, whom he found making ready to depart. You have done me, ſays he, a moſt important ſervice, and I entreat you to accept of this money to carry home, for I am ſure you have earned it. I thank you, replied the lawyer, I do not want money; keep and carry it back to your lady, that ſhe may not have occaſion to ſay, that you have ſquandered it away idly. Says Giannetto, my lady is ſo good and kind, that I might venture to ſpend four times as much, without incurring her diſpleaſure; and ſhe ordered me, when I came away, to bring with me a larger ſum. How are you pleaſed with the lady? ſays the lawyer. I love her better than any earthly thing, anſwers Giannetto: Nature never produced any woman ſo beautiful, diſcreet, and ſenſible, and ſeems to have done her utmoſt in forming her. If you will do me the favour to come and ſee her, you will be ſurpriſed at the honours ſhe will ſhew you; and you will be able to judge whether I ſpeak truth or not. I cannot go with you, ſays the lawyer, I have other

ther engagements; but ſince you ſpeak ſo much good of her, I muſt deſire you to preſent my reſpects to her. I will not fail, Giannetto anſwered; and now, let me entreat you to accept of ſome of the money. While he was ſpeaking, the lawyer obſerved a ring on his finger, and ſaid, if you will give me this ring, I ſhall ſeek no other reward. Willingly, ſays Giannetto; but as it is a ring given me by my lady, to wear for her ſake, I have ſome reluctance to part with it, and ſhe may think, not ſeeing it on my finger, and will believe, that I have given it to a woman that I love, and quarrel with me, tho' I proteſt I love her much better than I love myſelf. Certainly, ſays the lawyer, ſhe eſteems you ſufficiently to credit what you tell her, and you may ſay you made a preſent of it to me; but I rather think you want to give it to ſome former miſtreſs here in Venice. So great, ſays Giannetto, is the love and reverence I bear to her, that I would not change her for any woman in the world, ſhe is ſo accompliſhed in every article. After this he takes the ring from his finger, and preſents it to him; and embracing each the other, I have ſtill a favour to aſk, ſays the lawyer. It ſhall be granted, ſays Giannetto. It is, replied he, that you do not ſtay any time here, but go as ſoon as poſſible to your lady. It appears to me a thouſand years till I ſee her, Giannetto anſwered: and immediately

they take leave of each other. The lawyer embarked, and left Venice. Giannetto made entertainments, and preſents of horſes and money to his former companions; and having made a great expence for ſeveral days, he took leave of his Venetian friends, and carried Anſaldo with him, and ſome of his old acquaintance accompanied them. Every body ſhed tears at his departure, both men and women; his amiable deportment had ſo gained the good-will of all. In this manner he left Venice, and returned to Belmonte.

The lady arrived ſome days before; and having reſumed her female habit, pretended to have ſpent the time at the baths; and now gave orders to have every thing prepared, and the ſtreets lined with tapeſtry, and filled with men armed for the tiltings and exerciſes. And when Giannetto and Anſaldo were landed, all the court went out to meet them, crying, Long live our ſovereign lord! long live our ſovereign lord! When they arrived at the palace, the lady ran to embrace Anſaldo; but feigned anger againſt Giannetto, tho' ſhe loved him exceſſively: yet the feaſtings, tilts and diverſions went on as uſual, at which all the lords and ladies aſſiſted. Giannetto ſeeing that his wife did not receive him with her accuſtomed good countenance, called her, and inquiring the reaſon, would have ſaluted her. She told him, ſhe wanted not his careſſes: I am ſure, ſays ſhe, you have

have been laviſh of them to ſome of your former miſtreſſes at Venice. Giannetto began to make excuſes. She aſked him where was the ring ſhe had given him? It is no more than what I expected, cries Giannetto, and I was in the right to ſay you would be angry with me; but, I ſwear by all that is ſacred, and by your dear ſelf, that I gave the ring to the lawyer who gained our cauſe. And I can ſwear, ſays the lady, with as much ſolemnity, that you gave the ring to a woman; and I know it certainly: therefore ſwear no more. Giannetto ſaid, if what he had told her was not true, he wiſhed every misfortune to fall on him, that might deſtroy him; and that he ſaid all this to the lawyer, when he aſked for the ring. The lady replied, you would have done better to ſtay at Venice with your miſtreſſes, and have ſent Anſaldo here; for I hear they all wept when you came away. Giannetto's tears began to fall, and in great ſorrow he aſſured her, that what ſhe ſuppoſed could not poſſibly be true. The lady ſeeing his tears, which were daggers in her boſom, ran to embrace him, and in a fit of laughter ſhewed the ring, told every thing which he had ſaid to the lawyer; that ſhe was herſelf the lawyer; and how ſhe obtained the ring. Giannetto was greatly aſtoniſhed, finding it all true, and was highly delighted with what he had heard; and went out of the chamber, and told the

ſtory to the nobles and to his companions; and this heightened greatly the love between him and his lady. He then called the damſel who had given him the good advice the evening not to drink the liquor, and gave her to Anſaldo for a wife: and they ſpent the reſt of their lives in great felicity and contentment *.

* This novel is the firſt of the fourth day of the Pecorone.

The

The firſt Novel of the tenth Day of the Decamerone of BOCACCIO.

RUGGIERI de Figiovanni was perhaps the moſt accompliſhed gentleman that has appeared in this city of a long time; he being rich, and of a noble mind, and ſeeing, and having conſidered the Florentine manner of living, thought, if he remained here, he would have no opportunity (or at leaſt very rarely) of diſplaying his merit and talents; he took a reſolution of going, for ſome time, to the court of Alfonſo king of Spain, whoſe fame ſurpaſſed that of all the princes his cotemporaries: and having compleatly furniſhed his company with arms and horſes, he went to Spain, and was graciouſly received by the king. He living there ſome time in great magnificence, and giving remarkable proofs of his courage as a ſoldier, was greatly eſteemed ſoon as a man moſt valorous. In this ſituation he had frequent opportunities of examining minutely the behaviour of the king: he obſerved, that he gave, as he thought with little diſcernment, to this or that courtier, caſtles, governments of cities, and baronies, to ſuch who were unworthy of his favours; and to himſelf, who might pretend to be of ſome eſtimation, he gave nothing: he therefore thought this proceeding was a diminution of

of the fame he had acquired, and the fitteſt thing to be done, was to demand leave of the king to return home.

His requeſt was granted, and the king preſented him with one of the moſt beautiful and excellent mules, that had ever been mounted: the preſent was very agreeable to Ruggieri, becauſe of the length of the journey he had to make. One of the king's truſty ſervants was commanded to find a way, without diſcovering his orders, of accompanying Ruggieri, and riding along with him, to pick up, and recollect every word he ſaid of the king, and tell it to him at his return; and then mention the morning after, that it was the order of his Sovereign, that he ſhould go back to him. The man watching the opportunity, joined Ruggieri when he ſet out, ſaid he was going towards Italy, and would be glad to ride in company with him. Ruggieri jogging on with his mule, and talking of one thing or other, it being near nine o'clock, told his companion, that they would do well to put up their mules a little, and as ſoon as they entered the ſtable, every beaſt, except his, began to ſtale. Riding on farther the man always attentive to the diſcourſe of Ruggieri, they came to a river, and watering the beaſts, his mule ſtaled in the river: The devil take you, ſays he, for an untoward beaſt; you are like your maſter, who gave

you

you to me. The ſervant remembered this expreſſion, and many others as they rode on all day together; but he heard not a ſingle word drop from him, but what was in praiſe of the king. The next morning, as ſoon as they were mounted, and ſetting off for Tuſcany, Ruggieri was told the order of the king, and inſtantly turned back. When the king had heard what he had ſaid of the mule, he was commanded into his preſence, and with a ſmile, he aſked him, for what reaſon he had compared him to the mule, or rather the mule to him. Ruggieri with great freedom anſwered, My reaſon is plain, you give where you ought not to give, and where you ought to give, you give nothing; in the ſame manner the mule would not ſtale where ſhe ought, and where ſhe ought not, there ſhe ſtaled. The king ſaid upon this, If I have not rewarded you as I have many, who are of ſmall eſtimation when compared with you, do not entertain a thought that I was inſenſible to your great merit, and you not worthy to partake of my bounty: it is Fortune who hindered me; ſhe is to blame, and not me, and I will ſhew you manifeſtly that I ſpeak truth. My diſcontent, Sire, proceeds not, anſwered Ruggieri, from a deſire of being enriched by your gifts, but from your not having given the ſmalleſt teſtimony to my deſerts in your ſervice: nevertheleſs your excuſe is valid, and

I am

I am ready to ſee the proof you mention; though I have no need to make the trial; I can eaſily believe you without it. The king conducted him to a ſpacious hall, where he had already commanded two large caſkets, ſhut cloſe, to be placed; and before a large company told Ruggieri, that in one of them was contained his crown, ſcepter, and all his jewels, and that the other was full of earth: chooſe which of them you like beſt, and look upon it as your own, and then you will ſee that it is not me, but your fortune that has been ungrateful. Ruggieri, ſeeing it was the king's pleaſure, choſe one, which was ordered inſtantly to be opened. It was found to be the caſket full of earth. The king ſaid to him with a ſmile, Now you may ſee, Ruggieri, that what I told you of fortune is true; but for your ſake, I will oppoſe her with all my ſtrength. You have no intention, I am certain, to live in Spain; therefore I will offer you no preferment here, but that caſket which fortune denied you, ſhall be yours in deſpite of her: carry it with you into your own country, ſhew it to your friends, and neighbours, as my gift to you; and you have my permiſſion to boaſt, that it is a reward of your virtues. Ruggieri takes the caſket, and having returned his thanks to the king in the beſt manner he was able, for ſo great a gift, with chearfulneſs returned to Tuſcany.

F I N I S.